DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 131 862 IR 004 246

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TITLE Technology with a Human Touch: TV in the Classroom.
INSTITUTION East Chicago City School District, Ind.
PUB DATE 76
NOTE 17p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Closed Circuit Television; *Cultural Awareness; *Educational Television; Elementary Education; Grade 4; Grade 5; Grade 6; *Program Effectiveness; Student Attitudes; *Teacher Attitudes; *Teacher Participation; Video Tape Recordings
IDENTIFIERS Elementary Secondary Education Act Title III; ESEA Title III; Indiana (East Chicago); Multi Cultural School Experience Project

ABSTRACT

Despite initial high expectations for the impact of television on classroom teaching, quantitative studies conducted during the 1950's and 60's indicate that television instruction is not significantly different from conventional methods in its effect on student achievement. In 1972 the City School District of East Chicago, Indiana, introduced the Multi-Cultural Project, a curriculum intended to improve attitudes among racial and ethnic groups and to be delivered via closed circuit television and videotapes. During the first year of the program the entire burden of instruction was placed on the videotapes, resulting in student disinterest and teacher dissatisfaction. The second year witnessed several improvements, including a more stimulating format, student work packages, smaller group meetings, and the involvement of teachers in the instructional process. In the third and final year of the program, teachers were engaged in the planning and production process, and emphasis was placed on the interaction of all participants. The effectiveness of the program increased dramatically over the three-year period. (EMH)

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TECHNOLOGY WITH A HUMAN TOUCH: TV IN THE CLASSROOM

by

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INTRODUCTION

The use of TV in the classroom has had a somewhat long and eventful history. Much has been written regarding the conditions under which TV might be utilized; however, few spectacular results have been reported. Most agree that there exist tremendous opportunities to exploit the technology of TV; yet, few have defined precise procedures under which TV might be most productive. Thus, TV in the classroom is an undermined resource of instructional possibilities.

Even though much has been written concerning TV, many articles are descriptive. The authors tell "their stories" of using TV in the classroom. Other articles tend to report the results of research or review research. Few articles attempt to present a theory relating to the use of TV in the classroom. This article, though, will present a theoretical approach formulated from direct experience and experimenting with using TV in the classroom.

DREAMS

The possibility of using TV for educational purposes has traditionally generated much activity. As early as 1932 at the State University of Iowa, instructional applications of television were used. Following World War II, commercial stations initiated instructional television. In 1952 the FCC reserved 242 television channels for educational use, and by the middle fifties "instructional television began to receive serious attention from educational broadcasters." By the sixties, open and closed circuit television, educational and commercial stations were teaching almost every course in the public school or college curriculum.[1]

In the 1950's, TV in the classroom was seen as a vehicle to solve many of the logistical problems of education. There were increasingly larger numbers of students to educate, overcrowded facilities, greater amounts of information to disseminate, more educational tasks to perform and limited human and financial resources,[2] and TV was seen as a mechanism to alleviate some of these problems.

As a result of this view, large sums of money were made available for experimental and developmental purposes. Foundations as the Fund for Adult Education, Twentieth Century Fund, Payne Fund and the Ford Foundation contributed heavily. The Ford Foundation donated $76.4 million up to 1962. Many studies

financied by these foundations focused upon the acceptability of TV in relieving classroom and teacher shortages and its economic feasibility.[3]

This period of experimentation with TV might be characterized by great enthusiasm regarding the use of TV in the classroom. The extent to which money and manpower were devoted to this effort illustrates the optimism of the proponents of TV in the classroom, but despite all this optimism, the reality of using TV in the classroom presented several problems.

REALITIES

Studies completed between 1954-64 tend to reveal that there exist three difficult problems related to the use of TV in the classroom. These are: 1. TV is temendously expensive to use in the classroom. 2. For all its expense, TV does not appear to make a significant difference in student achievement. 3. The teachers tend to be far from enthusiastic about its use.[4] Taken together these three problems temper the optimism of the early proponents of TV and challenge the appropriateness of the way TV has been used in the classroom.

In 1967 the NEA Research Division queried a sample of 1,609 teachers in school systems throughout the U.S. Although closed circuit television had been available for some time, it was found that only 10 in 100 teachers had access to TV for

use in the classroom. Part of the explanation for this figure is the tremendous cost for TV equipment and maintenance.[5] The Federal government, though, has contributed substantial monetary assistance through various funding schemes.

There has been no marked improvement in the effectiveness of instruction through the use of TV in the classroom.[6] By 1960 there were 400 quantitative studies in which television instruction was compared to conventional instruction. The overall conclusion--no significant differences in student achievement.[7]

In 1971 William H. Allen reviewed research related to TV in the classroom. "The predominant finding from the hundreds of evaluative studies in instructional television is its overall equal effectiveness when compared with face-to-face instruction."[8]

Some studies, as the Pennsylvania State University Closed-circuit Television Project, 1955-57, were designed not only to measure student achievement but also to determine what its effects on instructors would be. It appeared that teachers did not like television very much.[9]

Often the teacher plays a passive role or subservient role to TV. As an onlooker, her responsibilities are often confined to turning the TV on and off. Such lack of involvement can lead to dissatisfaction.[10] Hauser (1968) indicates that "teachers seem to be frustrated, even distrustful of TV."[11]

Given that teachers have been at times dissatisfied and frustrated with TV , the relationship between TV and the teacher must be reassessed. The role of teacher as proctor to a televised course complete within itself seems to be too narrow a formulation of the teacher's role. A teacher must be more than a proctor. In order to maximize the effectiveness of TV in the classroom, there should be a three-way interaction. There should be a real, significant relationship developed between teacher, students and the TV. In this manner, the use of TV in the classroom can be maximized.

RELATIONSHIPS

In 1972 the School City of East Chicago, Indiana was awarded a grant from ESEA Title III to develop a program to improve attitudes among racial and ethnic student groups. A central aspect of the Multi-Cultural School Experience Project was the use of closed circuit TV and videotapes. The Projects team developed the videotapes and the instructional packets.

During three years, the Project team had an opportunity to experiment with a variety of approaches to the use of TV in the classroom. Each year of experience produced additional insights. These insights encouraged the staff to gather additional information and to modify the way in which TV was used. In hindsight, it is clear that each year represented

a different approach. In the final and third year, the project team developed an effective theory which governed its use of TV in the classroom. What follows is the history of the development of this theory.

The history of this theory will be discussed sequentially. Each year's approach and insights will be described separately. It should be emphasized that this history does not purport to be a definitive historical report of the Project per se. Rather, this history relates events which are germane to the development of the "3-way interacts" theory which governed the team's conceptual approach to the use of TV in the classroom in the third year of the Project.

THE FIRST YEAR

In the first year, an outright assumption was made about the use of TV in the classroom. The videotapes were to be teacherproof. This meant that the classroom teacher would have the responsibility of turning the TV set on and off and engage in fine tuning if necessary.

The first videotapes developed presented content-recall lectures for fourth, fifth and sixth grade students who were herded into an auditorium or, at times, into another classroom. The videotapes were at least thirty-five minutes in length and not very exciting. Occasionally, visual reinforcements supplemented the presentation of the video teacher. However, the students boredom was apparent as they shifted and slumped

in their seats. The teachers became "guards" to maintain silence and generally did not enjoy this role. One could sense that rebellion was on its way. Apparently, teacherproof TV was not working. Quick reconnoitring was necessary. Thus, it was decided that the teacher should be involved by presenting an initiatory activity before the TV program and a supplementary activity for follow-up. But, by this time both the students and teachers had become alienated. During that first year, most continued to watch the programs but were not involved with the classroom activities.

The underlying assumption of this approach was that TV tapes could be developed that were teacherproof. It was hoped that the videotapes could carry the instructional burden. The intention was to maximize the use of TV and minimize the impact upon learning due to the differences among teachers. It was felt that a student's learning in the Multi-Cultural Project should not be markedly determined by the relative effectiveness of his teacher.

Although the Multi-Cultural team was able to develop TV tapes that were self-sufficient in content, the program was marginally successful. Based upon the feedback from teachers and students, the team recognized that adjustments were in order and that the teacherproof approach to the use of TV in the classroom required severe assessment.

The Second Year

In the second year, new teachers were recruited and a new Project manager hired. Starting with a clean slate, the Project team developed a second approach to implementing the goals of the multi-cultural experience through the use of closed circuit TV. This new approach departed from the old approach in four key ways.

First, using Sesame Street as a model, the Project team attempted to make the videotapes snappy and professional. Puppets, music and "actors" were used to transmit information. Although the tapes were entertaining, informative and interesting, they were a pale reflection of Sesame Street. The Project did not have the financial, professional and technical resources to recreate Sesame Street type tapes. As experts in the field of TV viewing, the students provided valuable recommendations for the improvement of the tapes and indicated to the team that the efforts to duplicate the work of the "Children's Television Workshop" was less than a smashing success.

Second, in an effort to reinforce the content of the TV tapes, instructional packets were developed. These packets replete with objectives, pictures and games provided several activities designed to reiterate the concepts introduced in the TV tapes. The packets were successful, for they were fun, and they provided an opportunity for the individual student to get involved on a very personal level. The packets provided

an opportunity to manipulate peper and pencil and interact with other students and with the teacher. The TV tapes were impersonal and encouraged passive learning. The packets encouraged active involvement and participation.

A third departure from the approach of the first year was the use of a different instructional setting. Students were no longer herded into an auditorium to view the videotapes; rather, they stayed in their own classrooms to view the tapes and work on the packets. Although it required a great deal of coordination to provide for viewing the tapes in the individual classrooms, the Project team felt that such a Herculean logistical effort was worth it. By providing for viewing in the classroom, the Multi-Cultural Project became integrated into the normal operation of a teacher's class. No longer was the viewing of a tape a happening which disrupted the sequence of learning experiences developed by the teachers. Also, bringing the TV tapes into the classroom made the experience more intimate. Children could move their desks back and crowd around the TV and concentrate on the content of the tapes. The teacher could relax and enjoy the TV with her students. She no longer had to be on "patrol duty" in the auditorium.

Fourth and finally, the team moved away from the notion of teacherproof instructional tapes. The role of the teacher was more central in the second year. Rather than minimize her

role, the team attempted to maximize it by using the tapes and packets as tools to aid a teacher in achieving objectives. In this context, the teacher was viewed as the instructional leader of the Multi-Cultural Project. This shift in emphasis was undertaken to involve the teacher actively in the Project. The team stressed that neither the students nor the teachers could be passive participants in the Project.

The teachers were somewhat reluctant to participate actively. Some were uncertain as to how they should exercise instructional leadership in the Multi-Cultural Project. Many of these uncertainties were reduced, however, through in-service education and effective communication. Although the team made great strides through in-service education, some teachers observed that their role was akin to that of shop foreman and not instructional leader. They were responsible for overseeing the work. They sought a wider role to play and an opportunity to express themselves creatively as teachers within the context of the program.

The second year was one of great progress. There were problem areas remaining, but the team was confident that it had a "grip" on the situation. The team began to develop a set format which maximized the use of TV in the classroom. The format was characterized by an effort to systematically integrate the roles of students, teachers and TV in the instructional program.

The format evolved from the team's observations of teacher-student reaction to various TV tapes and instructional packets. Whenever a tape and/or the packet encouraged a high level of interaction between the TV, teacher and student, both teachers and students demonstrated high and warm regard for them. More importantly, as the teachers developed confidence in their abilities to manipulate the TV, packets and students, their enthusiasm for the Project increased. TV in the classroom no longer threatened them, for they learned to use it through the in-service programs.

The Third Year

In the third and final year, the Project team started with two assumptions about the use of TV in the classroom. First, it was assumed that the success of TV depended upon the attitudes of the teachers toward the program and TV. Second, it was thought that success depended upon the extent to which the team could create tapes and packets which would facilitate interaction between the teachers, students, TV and the packets. Accordingly, the team permitted much of its thinking and action to be guided by these assumptions.

The cumulative wisdom of the previous two years encouraged the team to provide as many opportunities as feasible for the teachers to participate in planning and decision making. Before the program started in September, the teachers and team met to preview the work ahead. There was an effort made to engage the

teachers in open, honest talk. The team was inordinately sensitive to what the teachers were saying and efforts were made to respond to their concerns at subsequent meetings.

In this initial stage of the third year, the team wanted to develop a sense of solidarity among the teachers and staff, a loyalty to the program and a belief in the effectiveness of TV as an aid to classroom instruction. These goals were largely accomplished through frequent formal and informal contacts between the teachers and the team. As a result the program had a positive and hopeful start. Everyone was optimistic about the program, and the feeling provided a great deal of confidence for all concerned.

To stimulate interaction between the teachers, students, tapes and packets, the tapes were revised and the packets modified. The major element in the revision of the tapes was providing "dead space" throughout the tapes. This dead space was provided so that the teachers would have an opportunity to interact with the students. This technique stimulated greater involvement on the part of the teachers and the students. Both had definite roles to play in the instructional drama. When the "dead space" occurred, the students and teachers were ready to discuss the questions presented on the tape. After a brief discussion, the tape would roll again.

After the videotape, the teachers could have the students use the packet immediately or engage the students in additional discussion. The teacher could also use films or slides especially

selected to reinforce the concept presented on the tape. The teacher in this scheme had an active role to play as did the students.

The results of this approach, the "3-way inter-act:" theory, were rewarding. The teachers were actively involved with the program and felt very positive about it. Their enthusiasm was evident at the meetings, and they indicated that the approach used made a great deal of sense to them. The students were also quite positive. The tapes were fun but not silly, and the tapes asked questions of the students and provided opportunities through their teachers to respond to these questions. The follow-up packets provided students with additional opportunities to interact with the teacher and other students. This high rate of interaction between the TV, teacher, students and packets produced the effect the staff had anticipated. The program was successful, for the team with the help of the teachers successfully fused the elements of the program into a unified, interdependent format.

CONCLUSION

With most school innovations, there is an expectation that the specific innovation will solve many problems. This tendency is especially acute with technological innovations. Instructional radio and film were once highly touted.

As an innovation, closed circuit TV also enjoyed a period of "great expectations." Proponents of its use dreamed of the many instructional problems TV could solve. But, TV generally has not fulfilled the optimistic hopes of its proponents. Research reveals that closed circuit TV produced few significant differences in student achievement.

None-the-less, closed circuit TV and other forms of instructional and educational TV can be effective as an instructional tool. The experiences of the Multi-Cultural Project indicate that if TV is integrated into a total instructional program and if TV, students and teachers have opportunities to interact, then the effectiveness of TV in the classroom can be maximized.

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